

Teacher Tidbits

59 Nuggets of Wisdom For Any Teacher

By Leilani Velazquez

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Introduction

The first year that I taught I was teaching fourth and fifth graders at a small private school right outside of Orlando, FL. That first year was a challenge because I had never taught before and my undergraduate degree was not in education so I lacked a lot of knowledge where providing education was concerned. I was really a novice that first year.

Like many neophyte teachers I felt overwhelmed and wanted to walk away from teaching, never to return again. How was I going to get through the school year if I did not have the experience or knowledge to draw on? I was trying to teach my students and explain how wonderful having an education can be, when it dawned on me: I needed to continue my own education! How else was I ever going to figure out this teaching thing?

During the summer of 2009 I took a bold step and entered a Master of Arts in Teaching program that would help me to become the teacher I needed to be. During my first course my professor was talking to us about the fact that teachers borrow from each other. We borrow materials, procedures, strategies, etc. With that in mind, I wrote the following tidbits for teachers to be encouraged and to borrow as needed.

Teacher Tidbit #1

You are the authority in your classroom. Yes, you! Be the authority!

Teacher Tidbit #2

Praise publicly, correct quietly. We never want to embarrass our students.

Teacher Tidbit #3

Aim for at least one positive comment weekly for each student. Parents get tired of hearing about all the negative things.

Teacher Tidbit #4

Go ahead and laugh! It's alright if your students know that you're human.

Teacher Tidbit #5

Be consistent! Be consistent! Be consistent! Let your “yes” mean “yes” and your “no” mean “no”. Stick to your policies and procedures no matter what.

Teacher Tidbit #6

Each class is different. What works for one class may not work for another class.

Teacher Tidbit #7

Hang up your certificates and degrees in your classroom. It reminds you that you deserve to be there, and it also encourages your students to succeed.

Teacher Tidbit #8

We don't dislike any students because we don't get paid to have personal feelings about them; we are there to teach them.

Teacher Tidbit #9

We can't please 'em all! Therefore, there will be parents that will have personal feelings about you and will dislike you.

Teacher Tidbit #10

Displaying your students' work is encouraging for them, even if they are high school students.

Teacher Tidbit #11

Save your receipts to write-off your teacher expenses on your taxes.

Teacher Tidbit #12

Try to meet with the parents at least once each semester. (Meet Your Teacher night does not count.)

Teacher Tidbit #13

Communicating with parents is not limited to a phone call home. E-mail is a great tool!

Teacher Tidbit #14

Protect yourself. Document everything!

Teacher Tidbit #15

Learning and thinking are not the same as listening and memorizing.

Teacher Tidbit #16

Know your rights as a teacher! They are always changing.

Teacher Tidbit #17

Think before speaking. Your comment could be the straw that breaks the camel's back for a student.

Teacher Tidbit #18

Never say, “I don’t care” to a student. They are depending on you to care!

Teacher Tidbit #19

Never let ‘em see you sweat! You can handle any situation in your classroom.

Teacher Tidbit #20

Be intentional when assigning homework. It should always have a purpose.

Teacher Tidbit #21

Have a BYOD day where students can use their 21st century skills in the classroom.

BYOD = Bring Your Own Device

Teacher Tidbit #22

Know the laws in your state surrounding education. You don't want to break any of them.

Teacher Tidbit #23

Listen to your students once in a while. You'll be surprised at what you'll learn.

Teacher Tidbit #24

You will have bad days, and that's alright because they don't last forever.

Teacher Tidbit #25

Keep Thank-You notes from the students and parents and pictures that students draw for you. When you're having a bad day, reread those notes and look at those drawings for some inspiration and motivation.

Teacher Tidbit #26

Tomorrow is an opportunity for a fresh start.

Teacher Tidbit #27

The evenings and weekends are yours. Relax!

Teacher Tidbit #28

At the end of the day make a list of progress and learning you observed. Look back at the list when you're having a challenging day.

Teacher Tidbit #29

There is power in your words. Speak life to your students.

Teacher Tidbit #30

Lesson didn't go how you hoped? You can reteach!

Teacher Tidbit #31

Not getting enough professional development at work? Start looking for your own professional development. There's always something to learn.

Teacher Tidbit #32

Try not to give your back to the class. Contrary to what we may say, we really don't have eyes in the back of our head, and a lot can happen when you're not looking.

Teacher Tidbit #33

Think management, not discipline.

Teacher Tidbit #34

Use your behavior plan each day and stick to it.

Teacher Tidbit #35

Set your standards from day one.

Teacher Tidbit #36

Contact the parents at the first sign of behavior or academic issues. The longer you allow the issues to persist, the more difficult they will be to correct.

Teacher Tidbit #37

Communicate with parents prior to conferences. A conference should follow notes and phone calls home, not the other way around.

Teacher Tidbit #38

If you communicate with a parent in any form (phone, e-mail, etc.), document it.

Teacher Tidbit #39

Try to send home a weekly class letter or newsletter to all parents letting them know of upcoming lessons; they like to be informed.

Teacher Tidbit #40

Don't get stuck in survival mode. We sometimes give busy work just to survive.

Teacher Tidbit #41

It may not seem like it at times, but students go to school with expectations. What are your expectations?

Teacher Tidbit #42

Study your lessons the day before. You don't want to be unprepared to teach, especially if we're expecting our students to come prepared to learn.

Teacher Tidbit #43

Set a time each day to work on lesson plans so that you're not working on all of them in one sitting or waiting until the day before they're due to work on them.

Teacher Tidbit #44

Students are only as anxious to learn as you are excited to teach.

Teacher Tidbit #45

Remember that you will only have one first year of teaching.

Teacher Tidbit #46

Trust your judgment, then follow your instinct.

Teacher Tidbit #47

If you don't try hard for your students to like you, they probably will.

Teacher Tidbit #48

It really does take a village. Learning involves the teacher, students, and parents.

Teacher Tidbit #49

Be confident in your knowledge, but not arrogant.

Teacher Tidbit #50

Your classroom is your stage. Break a leg! (not literally)

Teacher Tidbit #51

Get organized. You'll lose a lot less student work if you keep organized. It also helps you to be more productive.

Teacher Tidbit #52

Clear communication staves off confusion. Many students become confused because the teacher hasn't communicated clearly.

Teacher Tidbit #53

Connect with your students. It will make trusting you easier for them.

Teacher Tidbit #54

Connect with other teachers. Remember, we borrow from each other, so start organizing your personal learning network.

Teacher Tidbit #55

Not all students learn the same. Accommodate when necessary and modify as needed.

Teacher Tidbit #56

The goal is knowledge, not just passing a test.

Teacher Tidbit #57

Students remember their best teachers.

Teacher Tidbit #58

Technology is your new best friend. Welcome to the 21st century!

Teacher Tidbit #59

Would a brain surgeon stop researching after their residency has been completed? Then don't pass up on professional development. We are mind-molders by the way.

Acknowledgements

Cover Image: Designed by Leilani Velazquez

Thank you for reading my book. If you enjoyed it, won't you please take a moment to leave me a review at your favorite retailer?

Thanks!

Leilani Velazquez

About The Author

Leilani has been married to her childhood sweetheart for five years. She is also a mother of two beautiful little girls, ages 4 and 10.

In 2011, Leilani graduated with a Master of Arts in Teaching degree from Belhaven University. She is currently a middle school Mathematics teacher in Orlando, FL.

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